

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BAGHDA 00139 251047Z
ACTION INR-07

INFO OCT-02 AF-10 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 NSAE-00
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R 250922Z JAN 78
FM USINT BAGHDAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5552
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 0139

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, PINR, MASS, IZ, ET
SUBJECT: VISIT OF ERITREAN LIBERATION FRONT CHAIRMAN
TESTS IRAQI POLICY TOWARD ORN

REF: STATE 13154 (NOTAL)

1. ELF CHAIRMAN AHMED NASSER VISITED BAGHDAD JAN 19 AND
20 FOR TALKS WITH IRAQI OFFICIALS. ALTHOUGH HE WAS
RECEIVED AT APPROPRIATE LEVEL (BAATH NATIONAL COMMAND
AND RCC MEMBER TARIQ AZIZ), PRESS COVERAGE WAS TEPID.
IN CONTRAST TO EFFUSIVE STATEMENTS BY PAST ERITREAN
VISITORS, NASSER SAID HIS DISCUSSIONS WERE CHARACTERIZED
BY "CLARITY AND FRANKNESS", SUGESTING THAT TWO SIDES
WERE NOT IN FULL AGREEMENT SCANT REFERENCE WAS MADE TO
IRAQI SUPPORT, WHICH IN THE PAST HAS BEEN THOUGHT TO
INCLUDE MILITARY EQUIPMENT AS WELL AS FINANCING.

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PAGE 02 BAGHDA 00139 251047Z

2. NASSER'S STRIP CAME AT AWKWARD MOMENT FOR IRAQIS,
WHO ARE ATTEMPTING TO BALANCE COMPETING CLAIMS OF
TRADITIONAL SUPPORT FOR ARAB LIBERATION MOVEMENTS WITH
IRAQ'S STRONG INTEREST IN MAINTAINING GOOD TIES
WITH SOVIET UNION. HORN OF AFRICA IS REPORTEDLY A
MAJOR AGENDA ITEM IN CURRENT BRIEFINGS HERE OF IRAQI
AMBASSADORS FROM ARAB CAPTIALS. POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

MAY BE SUGGESTING THAT LIBERATION GROUPS LIKE ELF, WHICH ENJOY SUPPORT OF ARAB CONSERVATIVES, ARE NOT WORTHY RECIPEINTS FOR IRAQI LARGESSE IF IRAQ MUST PAY PRICE OF STRAINED RELATIONS WITH SOVIET UNION. ON THE OTHER HAND, WE HAVE SEEN NO EVIDENCE THAT IRAQ IS CURRENTLY AIDING MORE RADICAL ERITREAN GROUPS.

3. ERITREAN ISSUE, AS WITH OGADEN, IS PUTTING IRAQ IN DIFFICULT DILEMMA. AT THE MOMENT, IT APPEARS WILLING TO SUFFER SOMELOSS OF PAN-ARAB FACE IN ORDER TO REMAIN ON PASSIBLE TERMS WITH THE SOVIET UNION, WHICH IS PLAYING ROLE OF MAIN MILITARY SUPPLIER AND POLITICAL ALLY TO BOTH IRAQ AND ETHIOPIA. BUT CHOICE IS NOT EASY FOR IRAQIS, AND REGIME WILL LOOK FOR WAYS TO CARRY WATER ON BOTH SHOULDERS. MEDIATROY ROLE IS ONE POSSIBLITY, AND IRQIS MAY FIND IT A CONVENIENT DEVICE TO RELIEVE SOVIET PRESSURE. A MORE TYPICAL RESPONSE FOR IRQIS WOULD BE PROVISION OF COVER AID TO SOMALI AND ERITREAN REBELS WHILE CONTINUING TO ALLOW SOVIETS FACILITIES FOR AIRLIFT TO ETHIOPIA.
PECK

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NNN

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